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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - JANUARY 3, 2008

11. (U) HOUSE ARREST SCANDAL - INTERIOR MINISTER RESIGNS; ICTY
INDICTEE MARKAC RETURNS TO HAGUE:

MOI Ivica Kirin submitted his resignation on 29 December following reaction to a 22 December boar hunt with ICTY indictee Mladen Markac, who was supposed to be under house arrest during his provisional release from The Hague. The hunt took place near Kirin's hometown of Virovitica, about 100 km east of Zagreb, where he served as mayor before becoming Minister. The spokesperson for the current mayor posted a photograph of the hunting party on the local government website, drawing widespread media criticism. Kirin, who had endured other scandals during his term, took responsibility for his actions in a public statement. He had not been expected to be part of the new HDZ government currently under negotiation. On January 2, PM Sanader accepted Kirin's resignation and reaffirmed the GOC's commitment to and respect for the ICTY. "The government has shown that it fully respects the Constitutional Law on Cooperation with The Hague Tribunal," Sanader said, commenting on the resignation. "Kirin did what he had to do." The Virovitica mayor's spokesman also resigned. The day prior to Kirin's resignation, the ICTY issued an order for Markac's immediate arrest and transfer to detention in The Hague for violating the terms of his provisional release by taking part in the hunt. Markac was transferred two days later. Markac, along with Generals Ante Gotovina and Ivan Cermak, are charged by the ICTY with crimes against Serb civilians during and after Operation "Storm" in 1995. At that time, Markac was Commander of the Special Police in the Ministry of the Interior. A trial date has not yet been set.

12. (U) GOVERNMENT COALITION NEGOTIATIONS ENTER FINAL STAGE,
SABOR TO CONVENE JANUARY 11:

PM Sanader expects to sign a coalition agreement between his Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the Peasants Party (HSS) and the Social Liberals (HSLs) on January 7, according to press reports. Negotiations with minority representatives, whose votes would push Sanader above a 77-seat parliamentary majority, are still underway. President Mesic has called a session of the new Sabor for January 11. Newly elected parliamentarians will be sworn in, but the session may come too soon for the approval of a new cabinet.

13. (U) CROATIA'S ECOLOGICAL AND FISHERIES PROTECTION ZONE
(ZERP) NOW APPLIES TO EU MEMBERS:

As of January 1, EU member states are subject to Croatia's ZERP. The GoC declared the Zone, which extends to the middle of the Adriatic Sea, in line with international law in 2004 but then delayed application to EU member states due to pressure from Italy and Slovenia, whose fishing fleets regularly operate in these waters. The ZERP remains a bone

of contention in Croatia's EU accession negotiations, to date preventing opening of the chapter on fisheries and likely to attract more attention under Slovenia's EU presidency. PM Sanader publicly promised talks with EU neighbors to find a way forward and welcomed Slovene FM Rupel's comments putting the issue on hold pending formation of the new Croatian government. Local media commentaries questioned Croatia's current ability to enforce the ZERP until a recently passed law on formation of a coast guard is fully implemented.

WALKER